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Housekeepers' Chat

Monday, February 9, 1931.

Subject: "Feeding Father." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A

Bulletin available: Good Proportions in the Diet.

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"Sometimes," said Mary Lee Jones tapping her foot severely on my hardwood floor to express the exasperation of her feelings, "Sometimes I think the men in this world are almost a nuisance."

I raised my eyebrows. That really didn't sound like Mary Lee.

"Please don't think I'm a radical or a reactionary or a violent feminist, Aunt Sammy. I'm really not. But there are times when I should like to be on a desert island without a single man to cook meals for. This is one of those occasions. At present I'm trying to feed three men at my home and I'm not making a success at it."

"I can hardly believe that," I said, "when the fame of your salads has spread all over this town, when everyone knows that you can fix creamed cabbage fit for a king and cook Brussel sprouts so that they keep their beautiful green color and have the finest flavor in the world. As for your tomato and chicken casseroles --"

"That's just where the rub comes, Aunt Sammy. You may appreciate my cooking because you know something about diet rules. But as for my husband and his two cousins who are now visiting - well, they are incorrigibles. Do you think they appreciate my vegetable dinners and my casseroles? Alas, they do not. They are polite enough about my meals, but what they really want is plenty of meat with rich gravy, fried potatoes and doughnuts, pie and lots of good strong coffee to top it off with. What I can't understand, Aunt Sammy, is why there are so many books written on the care and feeding of infants. Feeding the youngsters in my family is no problem at all compared to feeding the men. Why don't people write books on the care and feeding of fathers?"

"That reminds me of one of Uncle Ebenzers favorite verses," I said. "Its title, by the way, is 'Feeding Father' and it is written by a college professor with a sense of humor, and as you'll soon see, an appreciation of just your problem.

"We know the latest diet rules and raise the children by them,
They keep Ma thin and Susan plump,
But Father will not try them.
Ma wants but little here below
Nor wants that little long,
But Pa wants coffee thrice a day
And wants that coffee strong. -
He's busting all nutrition rules

In spirit and in letter.
He wants fried spuds three times a day,
The greasier the better.
If Pa still stubbornly persists
Dame Nature's wrath to brave,
We fear, by gum, that he will come
To an untimely grave.
Just how he'll fare when over there
And what he'll chew we know not.
How will he eat celestial meat
Without a soggy doughnut?
Above the choir they'll hear our sire;
Above its loud hosanna,
He'll criticize the lack of pies
And kick about the manna."

"Hurray," said Mary Lee laughing. "Those are my sentiments exactly. I'll learn that piece by heart and recite it tonight at dinner. Maybe it will help a little. I really think, though, that it would help more if you would give me a little talk on food for men. Of course, I have my opinions about what they ought to eat, but I'd like to have them backed up by authorities. Couldn't you tell me what those experts in foods and nutrition whom you know have to say? I'd like to know so many things. For example, is my husband right when he says that men need much heartier food than women? Is it true that vegetables only contain water, flavor and roughage and really don't belong in a good man's diet? And do men, who are sitting in offices all day, require the same sort of food that their cousins and uncles working on the farm need?"

Three such big questions as these, I told Mary Lee, were too much for me to answer all at once even on a bracing winter morning. But I also told her that there was plenty of reliable scientific information to be had today on meals to keep the menfolks fit, and that we no longer had to depend on habit and guess to choose the right kind and amount of food needed to contain the best working conditions in the body. Underfeeding will weaken the body by causing it to draw upon its substances for fuel; overfeeding will result in the storage of an overload of fat and interfere with normal muscle action, making unnecessary weight to carry; or else it will overtax the digestive and excretory systems. The ideal condition is when a man carries normal weight for his height and when his daily intake of food corresponds to his daily expenditure of energy.

Muscular activity especially in the open air greatly increases any man's or woman's total energy requirement. That means more of the energy foods --- starches, sugar or fats. Sedentary occupations such as sitting at a desk all day require less food, though it would be better for the health of sedentary people if they would take some vigorous exercise each day and increase their food intake accordingly.

As for this question of eating rich foods, nutrition specialists say that because severe muscular work, if done under hygienic conditions, usually insures good appetite and digestion, more foods rich in fat -- such as fried cereal foods, sausage, pork and beans, suet pudding and pie -- may be taken without harm. However, for the average man such foods are recommended in only moderate amounts, no matter how much he may enjoy them.

Men as well as women need the minerals and vitamins found in foundation foods as milk, eggs and green raw vegetables. At least a pint of milk should be found in the day's dietary of every man, and green vegetables should be used as freely as possible. Adults do not require as large a supply of minerals and vitamins as growing children do but they do need them to maintain their health and vigor and their resistance to disease.

The amount and kind of food needed depends on the person's age and size and the amount of physical activity, not on sex. An active woman may require more food than a sedentary man.

With Father in mind -- and Mother as well --- the Menu Specialist has suggested a one-dish oven dinner today. A good meal for a winter day. An especially good meal for a busy day like Monday when most housekeepers need a menu that won't take long to prepare and serve. The first course is cooked and served in one baking dish and that dish makes a well-balanced meal because it contains meat with juice for flavor, potatoes, vegetables and fruit. Look on page 33 of your green cook book and there, in the center of the page, you will find a recipe for pork chops de luxe. First the onions are placed in the bottom of the baking dish, then the apples are cored, and cut, in rings which are slipped over the end of each chop. The chops are then put on top of the layer of onions, and sprinkled with flour. The remaining spaces are filled up with potatoes. Salt and pepper and some boiling water are added, the cover is put on the dish and the whole thing is baked for a little over an hour until tender and then browned without the cover. Isn't that easy?

Your family will probably want something tart to give relish to the main course so we suggest pickled beets and a simple dessert like canned berries or cherries or peaches to top it off with.

If your family should be in doubt as to whether this is a complete meal the same foods might be given in a menu this way: Baked Pork Chops; Creamed Onions; Mashed potatoes; Pickled Beets; and for dessert, Baked Apples. It's up to you, the Menu Specialist says, whether you prefer this meal all in one or in separate dishes.

TOMORROW: Finishing a Hard Wood Floor.

